

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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# Chinese Ploy: Dummy Missiles

By Jack Anderson

When newspaper headlines announced the tragic loss of six American fighter-bombers in a July 27 raid near Hanoi, the public did not know that the targets were probably dummies and that our military command apparently had been duped into attacking them.



The public also did not know that special antiaircraft guns had almost certainly been planted around the dummy SAM missiles in order to shoot down American bombers as they flew in low. Planes attacking missile sites must fly low in order to escape fire from the missiles, but when they come in low, they are vulnerable to old-style conventional antiaircraft guns.

The Defense Department, after the raid on July 27, announced the loss of three F-105 fighter-bombers "through intense conventional fire." Congressional circles, however, insisted that six planes were lost and later the Pentagon admitted that two other planes had collided in midair and another was shot down on a reconnaissance mission over

the missile sites. Total loss: six.

## Chinese Plot

Inquiry at the Defense Department regarding the above facts brought the reply that the matter was under investigation. This investigation, it can be revealed, shows that photos taken from the air after the raids fail to note the usual tracks through the jungles that a heavy missile launcher necessarily must make.

It would have been impossible to place a regular SAM missile launcher on location without leaving construction marks or trails on the neighboring terrain.

Accordingly, military intelligence has come up with the possibility that the dummy missiles were planted by the Chinese, not merely to knock down American planes, but provoke a dangerous incident between the United States and the Soviet Union. Here is what the Chinese had to gain by such strategy:

- The U.S. attack on the missile sites made it appear that President Johnson was taking a dangerous new gamble with world peace, thus putting the United States in a bad light.

- Since the world presumed that the Russians had built the sites, the attack put them on the spot. Pressure on the Kremlin to retaliate would have produced the kind of So-

viet-American crisis that the Chinese have been trying to stir up. Russian failure to retaliate also played into Chinese hands by making the U.S.S.R. look weak in the eyes of other Communist countries.

What lends further credence to the conclusion that this was a Chinese plot is the fact that the Russians, a few days earlier, had agreed with the United States to resume disarmament talks in Geneva and quietly explore the possibility of cautious cooperation with the United States in curbing arms budgets.

It is also considered significant that the Russian press did not report the shooting down of the six American planes that raided the supposed SAM missile sites.

In explanation why the American military command was trapped, it should be noted that in 1960 the Soviet Union had sent some semimobile SAM missiles to China. This was before relations between the two countries became strained.

So when an American plane was shot down 40 miles west of Hanoi on July 25, it was believed that China had moved some of this equipment down to North Viet-Nam and that the fire came from one of these semimobile launchers. Two days later, the Air Force retaliated. But expecting retaliation, the Chinese apparently moved their real missiles to a safe hiding

place and mounted a dummy nearby.